

Structuring the Counter-Discourses in Anand Patwardhan's Documentary Oeuvre.

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Abstract

Anand Patwardhan's documentary oeuvre has established itself as a resistance cinema of the Third-World, drawing influences from the Latin-American cinematic practices as against the agit-prop of 1907 Russian revolutionary tradition as well as the American and Grierson tradition of filmmaking. In India, while the revisionary historiography fills in these lacunas of providing multiple narratives and voices to the disparate growth story of the nation, independent political documentaries (IDP) and especially Patwardhan's work provide an inevitable visual-dimension to such narratives of growth and development, functioning as crucial sources of intervention to history and cinema both. His documentary projects have well-spoken against the indigenous fundamentalism, sectarian and communal antagonism, casteism and religious riots and has been touted as a critical whistleblower to the miscellaneous malpractices in government institutions. Despite being rejected, censored and

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having being faced other obstacles from the monopolized CBFC and Film Division, apart from the independent wrath of belligerent forces and cultural diktats, Patwardhan has been an unstoppable and controversial filmmaker.

This paper will analyze the capacities of Patwardhan's documentaries, in establishing an oppositional and dis-assimilated voices within the sovereign tradition of IDP, and in doing so help to open-up a space upon which the false clarities of state documentaries can be transformed into a meaningful ground of not just cognitive and superficial rather as concrete and meaningful resistances and dialectical resonances. The paper would zoom-in specifically on *In the Name of God, Father, Son and Holy War*, and *We are not your Monkeys*. Deconstructing the various scenes, shots and dialogues and stock images, the paper would chart-out and discuss factual testimonies that illustrate the issues from the leftist perspective as well as the scope of these narratives as counter-discourses. The conscious practice of symbolic resistance in theory and practice both has been termed as Counter-discourses. Deployed in various genres and practices, it is intended to produce a genuine change in a society against the "capacity of established discourses to ignore or absorb the would-be subversions." Some of these issues raised in the three films still remain marginalized and are hardly spoken-off. Analyzing the oeuvre of Patwardhan's documentaries, the present paper would seek to comprehend the capacities of these projects, of not just the investigative reporting, rather forming an entire bastion of leftist and Marxist discourse of resistance and change. The paper will also grapple with unequivocal question of the influence of these documentaries which has been limited to either international film festivals and intellectual confabulations or to film symposiums or circumscribed dialogue-fests; and why is it that these documentaries has not been enough to break the hold of prevailing ideologies. The abstract should summarize the content of the paper. Try to keep the abstract below 200

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Keywords – Discourse, Counter-Discourse, Marxism, Communal-Antagonism, Documentary.

Introduction

In the political documentarist tradition of India, Anand Patwardhan is one of those eminent voices whose activism and agency sends an astonishing flurry across the documentary clique of the world. His works rise above the din of cacophonous mainstream motion pictures for his magnanimous commitment for the amelioration of the Indian society, making him a major-league among other documentarists. His documentary oeuvre has established itself as a resistance cinema of the Third-World, drawing influences from the Latin-American cinematic practices as against the agit-prop of 1907 Russian revolutionary tradition as well as the American and Grierson tradition of filmmaking. Despite being rejected, censored and having faced other obstacles from the monopolized CBFC and Film Division, apart from the independent wrath of belligerent forces and cultural diktats, Patwardhan has been an unstoppable and controversial filmmaker.

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independent political documentaries (IDP) and especially Patwardhan's works provide an inevitable visual-dimension to such narratives of growth and development, functioning as crucial sources of intervention to history and cinema both. His documentary projects have well-spoken against the indigenous fundamentalism, sectarian and communal antagonism, casteism and religious riots and has been touted as a critical whistleblower to the miscellaneous malpractices in government institutions.

This paper would analyze two of his important works i.e. *Ram keNaam* and *Father Son & Holy War*, and the third one a brief song by a Dalit poet *We are Not Your Monkeys*, as works not just born and carved out of the communal and political immediacy of Patwardhan's times; rather these three works evidently revealing themselves to be a manifestation of Marxist and leftist propensities of Patwardhan's credo.

Akeel Bilgrami, in an interview with Patwardhan says:

Patwardhan's pursuit . . . trace back to Gandhi and to Marx: the moral power of non-violence, the belief in the judgement of poor and working people away from the centres of power and wealth (in other words the belief in democracy), and the wholesale (not piecemeal) rejection of the comprehensive ruin wrought by the stranglehold of capital, controlling states as well as the media, both of which do its bidding, generating imperial domination to this day, to say nothing of generating and sustaining inequalities in just about every society in the world . . . owing to social prejudice of caste and gender and race . . .

Despite following a visible ideological apparatus, none of the research-based works on Patwardhan's oeuvre have explored these "familiar efficacies", which the present paper attempts to explore through a content analysis of three of his cinematic renditions. Dissecting the images, shots, dialogues, filler footages and confrontations with the subjects; the process

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of analysis would register how the cinematography of these two documentary texts (cinema as a text too), consists of an *underlying narrative* or *the back-story* of an entire bastion of Marxist and leftist discourse, when located in the Indian political scenario. The paper would also critique Patwardhan's limitations as a documentarist in exploring these issues, and of the typical criticism levelled against him of being Anti-Hindutva and thus, projecting a colored and flip-sided cinematic projection. The method of analysis would, undeniably be, placing the two works within the Marxist theorization of interpretation. It will also analyze the capacities of Patwardhan's documentaries in establishing an oppositional and dis-assimilated voices within the sovereign tradition of IDP, and in doing so, how these works can help to open-up a space upon which the false clarities of state documentaries can be transformed into a meaningful ground of not just cognitive and superficial rather as concrete and meaningful resistances and dialectical reiterations'.

I

The dislocation of Soviet Marxism from its place of origin, to its movement into the non-capitalist world of colonies, 'the history that Gramsci called the revolution against the Das Capital', transfused the ideology into new theoretical apparatuses of anti-imperial and anti-colonial nationalism. The beginning of Indian Marxism, from this Soviet Marxism, centred on the ascendancy of nationalism and state centred developmentalism. Sanjay Seth argues that "most of the activists drawn to Marxism in India were fundamentally nationalists seeking a more militant inspiration to their nationalism that was provided by the Indian National Congress and who wanted to find a link between the economic demands of the workers and peasants and fight for independence" (Seth 139). "M.N. Roy", on the other hand, refutes by "making a case of nationalist movement of the Indian bourgeoisie as an essentially fraternal or internecine struggle between rival national bourgeoisie and not a struggle that

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could lead to the overthrow of also concluded that the working class in India (and by implication, the working class in other colonies) should not be limited by political program of the nationalist movement but had to place its own class demands on the agenda. The working class should, even if circumstances allowed, actively work towards the overthrow of its “own” bourgeoisie and the establishment of a workers’ state” (Sherlock68).

By creating an alternative cinematic space of interrogation, *Ram ke Naam* functioned at the level of intervention, to intercede the 1992 status-quo of oppressive networks of majority communalism and the entire movement built around evangelizing to break-down the age-old medieval structure, emanating almost as a resistance counter-discourse to the Hindutva propaganda constituted of the half-truths and manipulated facts. That the Ramjanmabhoomi movement, officially a “faith” movement to restore the birthplace of Lord Ram, but essentially communal and anti-Muslim, was also a coveted backlash and resentment of the upper and middle classes against the alleged attempts of Mandal commission implementation in 1989 by V.P. Singh. Evidently, the popular adage of Marx that ‘all kinds of strife and battles with the state are real struggles between classes’ can also be adapted and tested on the existing Indian society. About the Indian caste system, Marx says in “A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy”:

Legislation may perpetuate land ownership in certain families, or allocate labor as hereditary privilege, thus consolidating it into caste system.” (201)

Further, in the Communist Manifesto (1848), Marx and Engel declare that “ruling ideas of each age have been the ideas of its ruling class.” (61) Structurally, the dominant class which is economically invincible, subjects the rest of the population with its own ideology by employing a variety of ends of the Superstructure vis-à-vis in the political systems, legal institutions, cultural practices and religion etc. These paradigms of ethical, moral and cultural

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practices are expanded and tailored to suit and reinforce its ideology and interests with a desired impact. The exploited class, according to the Marxist philosophy, is then, supposed to wage a crusade against and resist this hegemonic domination. But the case of Ramjanmabhoomi movement, however, does not result into a typical field of revolt between the classes, rather, the status of Hindu religion/Ram is designed large enough to encompass and dilute any such divisional hierarchy of the Hindus, into Savarnas and lower-class Hindus, and to turn this issue, ostensibly into a territorial conflict of ethnic-domination, a sphere, in this case a 2.7 acres of land to be communalized.

The film, ergo, does not just limit itself to the veracity issue and the stubbornness of exactly where Lord Ram was born, of the Mandir-Masjid original existence; rather it also puts a spotlight on the amount of “hurt” and “pain” of the upper and middle-educated classes, created by the Mandal action in 1989 which had put danger to their “official sinecures of the bureaucratic rent-seeking” (Chaitanya) bourgeoisie which, by then and even now, “controlled the huge politico-bureaucratic structure (Chaitanya).” It exhibited, in the words of K Balagopal, “a fascist concentration of negative traits, of resentment and frustration born in reaction to the space conquered by the oppressed and the underprivileged in India’s political universe.” (792)

Exploring this subterranean quagmire, the documentary offers a number of street-level guerrilla confrontations and recordings of the firebrands’ speeches, who shamefully question the need to constitutionally offer any such kind of benefits to the lower classes, maliciously dismissing a popular politician as belonging to the “pichardijaati” (backward class). The high points of the documentary, however, are those forlorn and virtually unnoticed and unheard voices who express and record their actual class struggles vis-à-vis from being forbidden to enter temples, to poor farming wages to better houses or slums and

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even the stigma of untouchability. Consider the sombre and mournful revelations of the slum woman, who calls herself uneducated, while uttering out one of the most sagacious disclosure:

Jo ye bhaashanchalrahahaina to vohi sun rrehain hum log, to vohigareebkeliyekyakarrhehai ye log. . .ab hum log aise footpath perehthainvohimunsipaltiaatihai to toddaaltihairkyakareng bearish meibaccheloglekesotehaitationmeijake par vo bi bhagadetein police log . . .hum padelikheinsaannihain (Ram keNaam, 16: 35-17:15)

(we're listening to their speeches/what do they do for the poor/ we live on the pavements/ but the Municipality demolishes our huts/when it rains we sleep in the stations with our kids/ Municipality comes and removes our hut/ when it rains we sleep in the stations with our kids /but the police drive us out. . . we're not educated so we can't tell what's going on)

The adversaries and day-to-day difficulties of the common agricultural workers, and peasants, who, because of the instability due to violence in the volatile Ayodhya and its hinterland, faced diminishing returns in their debt-stricken daily trade:

Hum to kehetfaislahovohitheekhai. Donotareefmeitnikeechhai par faaydakuchnihihoga. . .Unkaghaatanhihumare logo kaghaatahai. Hum aaj bi dukaankholeekpaisekakaamnihua. Aapbtao 4kg kanamakhaiaaj 1.5 kg mei bi nihikrahaai. Bas kahaihumarelogankagalla hi khalisastahaiaurbaaki sab mehenga hi hai.

Yahan koi ladainhithi. Yahan koi aisebaatnihai. Ye to baaharbaaharkehain jo sab . . .garekcheezbnihai to use todnanhithi.

(We feel it's best to reach a verdict. Now both sides have so much hatred there are only losses where's the benefit? It is not their loss it our entirely our loss. We opened shop today but didn't earn a penny. You tell us even salt costs us Rs. 4 per kilo today and it is not even

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getting sold as 1.5kg in Rs.4. Only the grain we grow and sell is cheap and all rest is inflated. There was no fighting here. We didn't have any tensions it's the outsiders . . . once something exists no one should break it). (*Ram ke Naam*, 40:35- 44:00)

These recordings are the ones which are predicated on the requirements of providing corrective sufferings but silenced under the cacophony of the mosque demolition: the struggles of labor, the upper classes, the farmers, scantily earning peasants, women, small scale traders, etc. These oral histories remain important for their ability to bring to notice what the cavalcade and chariot of Advani left behind: violence, the marks of inflation-high priced raw materials and cheap priced grains, burnt houses and displaced families. But Patwardhan's favouring of "preservation of these emotional investments over interrogation detracts from their power as vehicles" of critical understanding. (Renov27)

The quasi-federal nature of the Indian Constitution and abundant material opportunities post-independence, outpoured newer market players and maiden investments etc. to set-up a number of institutions, ventures, trade-enterprises and even new political parties. Politics essentially became a means of expanding one's future avenues to gain greater access to corridors of power and that too only by revolutionizing "the means of production". It is this imperialistic character of the bourgeoisie enterprise that Marx has always find problematic. The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production. . . . The need to constantly expand market . . . chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. (Marx & Engels, 7) At the level of Superstructure, "the federal decadence" of the 1960s and 1970s, "combined with Capitalist degeneration produced a situation where growing criminalization of the society, coexists and grows in the company of caste and communal feelings, which are exploited by the ruling classes for their political-electoral purposes(CPI M)." (Yechury)

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So, what begun as the exploration of the legality of Ram birthplace in the documentary, on exactly the same place where the Masjid stood, eventually became a portentous microfilm; a kind of substrata and critical Marxist warning of/on the upper classes, who had hitherto laid a firm grip on national resources, privileges and who didn't want the national resources, privileges and mechanisms of hegemony be fairly distributed.

The extensive interpretation of Patwardhan's documentary oeuvre has responded in accordance with the evolving and prevalent cultural paradigms of the time in which they fall. Accordingly, *Father, Son and Holy War* is regarded as a work which begun with exploring the political atmosphere and legacy of communal violence in the aftermath of December 6, 1992, focusing on the patriarchic rhetoric of fundamentalism, and "became, in Patwardhan's own words, a reflection on the crisis of male-identity (Barucha, 1610)." The documentary also has recordings and accounts of both Hindu and Muslim women, who question the normative phallogentrism of Indian men, the patriarchal violence and the alleged supremacy of men over women. However, a close reading of the documentary text also reveals the underpinnings of Patwardhan's credo, as it is this politics of representation, which counters for the laconic shifts from the dominant point of issue. In doing so, one can't help but to notice Patwardhan's Marxist Feminist investigations and the apriority notion that Marxists needs to embrace feminist goals, and feminism need to enlarge its paradigms to incorporate the socialist perspective.

In the documentary, the utterances of men with their rhetoric of bravado and machismo reveal their deep-seated beliefs system which is based on the social constructions of sex and the anatomy of human body being robust or vulnerable. Marxist Feminists in this regard, draw upon Marx's Superstructure and base model of the society and argue that

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“gender discriminations are entirely functions of economic rather than anatomical and other factors.”(Dahiya,xxi) Marxist Feminists assert that:

Patriarchy is rooted in economics. The forces of production are so constituted that that historically men have largely owned the means of production while women have owed only their labor. . . From the Marxist point of view, the class structure is primary and gender differences are secondary, men and women being historically differentiated by this relationship to the means of production. . . . The class structure (i.e. the unequal distribution of wealth) is also a gender- inflicted hierarchy, inequality between the sexes being ultimately reducible to economic inequalityWomen’s oppression is part and parcel of the economic mode of production termed capitalism.(Friedrich xxii)

Patwardhan explores this Marxist Feminist dimension in *Agni-Parikhsha*, ‘the Roop Kanwar’s conflagration as Sati, where an encounter with lower-class Rajput woman reveals how this tradition of Sati, the self-immolation act towards the fidelity and love of the husband, is entirely an exercise of expanding monetary and market-based benefits. According to her, it is to escape the financial responsibility of the widow and suspend all scopes of her legitimate rights over the inheritance of husband’s wealth and property, that *Sati* is committed by a woman. With the *Sati* accomplishment of these women, an unknown, oblivion town gains some recognition and becomes a center of religious pilgrimage. Constructing temples and shrines in the *Sati*’s name, the town can be a spot of pilgrimage-tourism and gain further economic benefits through charities and funds. Thus, apart from eliminating the claimants of inheritance, the commercialization of Sati also brings in profits.

The next work *We Are Not Your Monkeys*¹is a short five minutes musical protest song and the video, which is anti-caste in its tone and diction, written and composed by the

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Dalit activist Daya Pawar, Shambaji Bhagat and Anand Patwardhan himself. It critiques the age-old epic Ramayana of its rationalization of caste hierarchy, and sanctification of segregating Hindus on the caste and even racial lines. Through the lenses of a Dalit singer, sitting amongst a group of poor people, it is expressed how the class hierarchy and caste pyramid has recently been given a racial dimension. It was composed after the “modern scholars, examining the Sanskrit roots of Hindu mythology, have found references to a story about a nomadic Aryan tribe's conquest of darker-skinned indigenous peoples. The Sanskrit word for caste - Varna - also means "color." One of the original functions of the caste system, which prohibits inter-caste mingling, may have been to preserve the racial purity of the ruling class (Zongjiao).” Sumana Ramanan, in a review, describes it as:

It is not often that a five minute film subverts a conceptual framework passed on through the centuries with such clarity. ...Patwardhan's film is an unsettling but liberating and moving experience. It is unsettling because it calls into question ideas passed on through the ages that we have internalized as “truth”. It is liberating because its relentless logic exposes the contradictions of a self-serving ideology. And it is moving because it is the clear voice of people we rarely hear.

The Marxist, class-based analysis of race propounds that in order for the working class to be not able to wage a battle against bourgeoisie, it must be kept fragmented and racially divided materially as well as ideologically. Though Marx never co-related the caste of Egyptian and Indian societies with race, his analysis racial analysis of Irish and British peasantry reflects upon racism being justified in other societies. In a letter to S. Meyer A. Vogt in New York in 1870, Marx wrote:

Every industrial and commercial center in England possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary

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English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude is much the same as that of the "poor whites" to the "niggers" in the former slave states of the USA. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker at once the accomplice and stupid tool of the English rule in Ireland.

This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist maintains its power. And that class is fully aware of it. (222)

Although it has received its share of criticism of excessive reliance on economic determinism and class reductionism, but when enforced on the 'Varna' system of the Hindu society, it reveals similar propensities. In the song as well, the condemnation by Dalits being used as foot soldiers, against the Muslims, analogous to the monkey army at the time Ramayana, against the evil, is formulated. The song is an effortless and masterful critique of the malice of the Hindu society as well as Lord Rama, whom the Dalits consider to be monogamist and casteist and racist. M.C. Raj in "Dalitology" also explains Ram's imperialist ambitions of establishing the ascendancy of Brahminical culture by slaughtering the indigenous people of the forests.

When asked about introducing caste into the discussion of communalism, particularly in *We Are Not Your Monkeys*, Patwardhan says:

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I started connecting caste to communalism in *Ram ke Naam* back in 1990. Long before *We are Not Your Monkeys*. I went out of my way by asking the caste affiliation of people I was interviewing regarding their position on the Mandir, or whether they were against the demolition. It's not that I wanted to know everybody's caste, but I wanted to show the correlation between secular values and the fact that the people who articulate them tended to be of the lower castes, and the fact that communal values were coming out of the upper castes. Throughout *Ram ke Naam* caste is a very prominent issue. This is why you see the connection between the Mandir and Mandal Commission in that very upfront way. In *Father, Son and Holy War* too I have talked about caste. When a thread ceremony is being performed and there is chanting of the Vedas, the voiceover is about how caste system was probably invented as a form of racial purity. This theme of caste and communalism is more crystallized in *We Are Not Your Monkeys*. (Raza & Kumar)

II

The two documentaries, despite being unparalleled and exceptionally remarkable, have their own reservations addressed against Patwardhan and his instrumentality. Both, *Ram ke Naam* and *Father Son and Holy War* function at the dual level of exploring the politically expedencies of the 1990s and its imploratory reflexivity: The legality of Mandir-Masjid controversy and its underlying discourse of aversion for Mandal and attempts to solidify society erasing the caste lines. *Father, Son and Holy War*, similarly, explores the aftermath of Ayodhya and Bombay riots of 1993, as well as the underlying rhetoric of hypersexuality and hegemonic manhood/masculinity of Indian men. But in both the documentaries, Patwardhan's fixation and obsession with sectarianism, communal violence and

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fundamentalism, renders these two works as sectional and straight jacketed into uni-dimensions. While the glaring shock of communal heinousness in the segments of Hindu men cannot be forgotten or forgiven, Patwardhan often touches upon some relevant disputed points inadequately, vis-à-vis the *causes* which lead to the development of such a kind of sectarianism and cultural jingoism. The problem is not so much of witnessing ‘how shamelessly the riots are happening or the viciousness of the propaganda being spread. Rather the problem lies in exploring and the causal factors, or why is it spreading like the way it did; when and why it gained so-much momentum so as it turned into a mass movement of this sort? Patwardhan, in this regard, justifies:

I like the academic exercise in retrospect but I do not like it a priori. If I were very theoretical I would end up making films of a totally different kind. If I pre-thought out everything to the degree of controlling that “now this is to be shown,” etc., I think my films would become partly fiction . . . It is not that there is no theoretical basis to any of my films; it’s not that I don’t read anything, but I usually do the reading in the process of the work. Films take a long time to edit and to put together. I keep shooting and editing. The process of filmmaking is continuous for several years and in those years there is plenty of time to study the issue and do research. My films are not pre-planned and then created. (Raza & Kumar)

Dismantling the notions of manhood in *Father, Son and Holy War* follows the method of juxtaposition and contradiction, the interviews of Hindu Men/Muslim Men, Hindu Women/Muslim women; Hindu demagogues/Muslim agitators etc., but there is hardly a voice of Muslim fundamentalism in *Ram ke Naam*, to balance out the extreme and ugly side of the Hindutva program. Although *Ram ke Naam* stands unrivalled due to its contribution to

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the counter-communalistic activist domain, but a voice or two from the ultraconservative Muslim remarks could have made it uniformed.

In the entire scenario of mosque controversy, it was expected of the investigative reporting or vigilant press to expose the ‘violations of laws and regulations’, of “how and why individuals and institutions fail, when things go wrong, who is responsible, how the wrongdoing was done, and its consequences” (Coronel 5) exposing not just an *individual* or the *system* rather the failures of collective psyche – an objective which *Ram ke Naam* capably achieves. Therefore, once the electronic and print journalism coverage was no longer a potent tool, a deficient one rather, alternative media *forms* and *discourses* did become potentially concerned/ proactive, due to which the rise of autonomous societies, voluntary organizations, and formal collaborations and even private/freelancing performed the watchdog reporting to combat the political vendetta.

The larger scenario is observed by Rustom Bharucha, as he contends that:

The non-reflexive limitations of Patwardhan’s perspective of ‘men’ are evident in his mode of filmmaking, which is driven by political necessities rather than shaped through the processes of introspection.(1614)

Therefore, it is not as such men who are circumvented due to excessive emphasize on facticity in *Father, Son and Holy War*, rather, there lacks an intrinsic focus on the feminist concerns as well, when see the concerns of Hindu and Muslim women. They are represented tangentially, i.e. in co-relation to the examination of the structures of alleged hyper-masculinity of Indian men. The deliberations of these women take place within this master narrative of hegemonic masculinity and circuit of reflexivity. Correspondingly, we are only apprised of the glimpses of these women and their articulations through a slant peep into their domain of affection and intimacy. The tyranny of their husbands, through verbal triple *Talaq*

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brings sisterhood solidarities to them under the Lawyer's Collective, as shown in the documentary. The women interactions as representations also function at the redundant level of being placed as a filler images, in at the end and other places in the documentary. Patwardhan ends his work with an icon of mother goddess, which appears mainly and "merely as a utopian point of reference, a politically correct insertion, but not part of the lived or imagined relationship (Bharucha 1615)."

The capacities of these three works certainly lie in emerging as potent tools of counter-discourses against the fundamentalist discourse of Hindutva. Also, the desire to call for an ideological shift or initiate a re-modelling of one's religious, political, or social beliefs of the readers, entangled and hegemonized, is the essence of all counter-discourses. Although, this kind of counter product in literature and art, does not always receive a very cordial reception, as is accepted only with an prime aesthetic value, as "propaganda too often ignores man as a totality, concentrating on him 'aspectively'- in terms of politics or sectarian religion" (Britannica). Patwardhan has been under a regular indictment, to which he retorts:

The fact that these films, which were considered propaganda, are to be screened in the mecca of art gives me a perverse sense of joy. The joy is not that I now consider myself an artist. I do not believe in any art that is self-consciously created. I see art as a by-product of the attempt to communicate. When this act of communication transcends time and geography, it transcends its immediate purpose. In the same way that indigenous Warli painters never self-consciously created art but once their work was framed in a gallery it changed perceptions, I believe that what the world considers "art" is mainly about framing. (Korossi)

However, as Richard Terdiman says, "counter-discourses are unable to affect a revolution since they are destined to remain marginal to the dominant" (Thomas 215), newer

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methods and regulations could be adopted to initiate, unfold and divulge the bastion of powerful and real oppressive systems and practices. Chaitanya, in the context of *Ram ke Naam* insist that:

Ram ke Naam is a powerful tool to conscientize the public about the perils of religious fascism. Pity, it is very much underutilized by the left and democratic forces in their campaigns. In contrast, the communal right is systematically going about its job using both the audio-visual and the print media. Groups of professionals are organized in rebutting any criticism of the Hindutva platform on a day-to-day basis. It is imperative that mass organizations of the centrist and left parties utilized well-made documentaries like this in their programs of mass-communication. (2647)

The very fissures and apertures of a liberal republican mode of democracy has fed and crystallized the ideology of Hindutva, which is, in-turn, unrelentingly breaking its very foundations. The role of political documentaries as a weapon to address these social regression and religious atavism can be successfully addressed, if encouraged through a supportive system of dissemination and viewership. The traditions of IDP in India have consistently faced obstructions in its screenings from the Film Division of India and CBFC: from the lack of funds, television programming, promotions and sponsorship to censorship. Being independently made and organized, “these documentaries provided an alternative perspective to the typically jingoistic projects produced by the state; “instead of exotic people, hungry and tortured humans came up as protagonists; instead of ritualistic song and dance, minority peoples from the lands beyond central India voiced their anger, fear and frustration common to minorities in any totalitarian country; instead of the plastic gloss of national pride, the basic formation of the modern State were questioned” (Dutta). Lack of funding and other censorship mechanisms have resulted in distinctive ways to offering the

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screenings even clandestinely. For this, sometimes, the un-stationary documentary festivals are organized which roam around different regions and villages, however the extent of wider audience, which a prime-time broadcaster like Doordarshan offers, can hardly compensate for these mobile techniques. The other means of showcasing these works is limited to the aides provided by NGOs and non-profit institutions. Apart from these and other miscellaneous challenges, the final fate of these documentaries remains undecided and dubious because of the lack of the consumption and market for such an activists work. But the urgency of today's times, with the rise in belligerent forces of fanaticism and the culture of intolerant monomaniac-ism, calls for a great deal of attention to the documentary coterie, to capture these denominational surroundings with a more robust thoughtfulness.

Endnotes

1. The translation of *We Are Not Your Monkey* song provided as sub-titles, taken from the "Sheffield Doc/Fest 2010: AnandPatwardhan Masterclass":

The rulers who controlled all knowledge/
And claimed the Ramayana to be India's
history/
Called us many names: 'Demons', 'Low-castes', 'Untouchables'/
But we
were the aborigines of this land/
Listen to our story:

Today we call ourselves Dalits—the oppressed/
Once the Aryans, on their horses,
invaded the land/
Then we, who were the natives, became the displaced
O Rama, O Rama/
You became the Gods and we the Demons/
You portrayed our Hanuman as a
monkey
O Rama!/
You representative of Aryans/
You enslaved us to form a monkey
army/
Those you could not subjugate you deemed Rakshasa-demons/
But we were the
forest's Rakshaks—protectors!/
To keep your racial purity, You invented the
hierarchy of caste/
Through your 'laws of Manu' you trampled on the rights of

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women/ You made your wife Sita, undergo the ordeal of fire to prove her chastity/
Such was your male law, O Rama!/ When Shambuka, the untouchable, tried to gain
knowledge/ You beheaded him O Rama/ Thus, did you crush those who tried to rise
above their caste./ Days passed, Years and aeons went by/ But our lives remained
the same/ We skin your dead cattle so that you can wear shoes/ We clean your gutters
so that you can stay clean./ Do you ever ask them O Rama, what our caste is? Do you
ask what our religion is? Independence dawn and with it began the rule of
Constitution. The author of the Constitution Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, himself born an
untouchable/ Framed the Constitution around secular ideas/ The castle of caste
privilege began to crumble/ No longer the elite could skim the milk of religious
exploitation/ But poverty grew and to divert the poor from their real enemy/ A new
enemy was found: Muslims were caught in the pincers of Ayodhya to taught lesson/
To destroy lanka, O Rama, you formed us into a monkey army. And today you want
us-the working majority to form a new monkey army and attack Muslims, But be
warned, be warned you purveyors of self-serving religion we will be monkeys no
more. We will sing songs of humanity and we will make you human as well.

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